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Letter dated 12 May 2008 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey the attached communication dated 7 May 2008 which I received from Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

08-33808 (E) 150508

Annex

Letter dated 7 May 2008 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 1510 (2003), I attach a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from November 2007 to January 2008. I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jaap **de Hoop Scheffer**

Enclosure

Quarterly report to the United Nations on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force

Introduction

1. The present report covers the period from 1 November 2007 to 31 January 2008. As at 28 January 2008, the total strength of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) stood at 47,710 personnel from 26 NATO countries and 2,258 from 13 non-NATO countries.

2. Throughout the reporting period ISAF has continued to assist the Government of Afghanistan in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions. From 1 November 2007 to 31 January 2008, ISAF suffered 237 casualties in total: 31 killed in action, 179 wounded in action, 4 non-battle deaths and 23 non-battle injuries.

3. The operational focus has been to maintain pressure on opposing militant forces while maturing partnered relationships with the Afghan National Security Forces. The Afghan National Army has continued to grow in both size and capability. Combined operations, specifically in the southern and eastern regions, have served to challenge the intentions of the opposing militant forces and develop a more competent Afghan Army.

4. ISAF continued to build momentum by sustaining a high operational tempo in the winter months. The Afghan National Security Forces were given greater responsibility in the planning and execution of operations. ISAF, in partnership with the security forces, will continue to conduct operations to expand the authority of the Government and provide security in order to facilitate reconstruction and development by the international community.

Security situation

5. Over the reporting period activity of the opposing militant forces throughout Afghanistan was influenced by severe winter weather conditions as well as successful ISAF and coalition operations. Owing to those factors, the opposing militant forces primarily concentrated on attacks using improvised explosive devices. An exception to this pattern is the improvised explosive device suicide attack on the Serena hotel in Kabul. The opposing militant forces are expected to continue to attempt such attacks in the future. Regional security situations are as follows:

(a) **Regional Command Capital**. Despite the attack on the Serena hotel, Regional Command Capital witnessed a reduction in the number of attacks by the opposing militant forces. Increased cooperation of the population with the Government and ISAF resulted in the turnover of large weapon caches.

(b) **Regional Command North**. The situation in Regional Command North remained stable, yet volatile. Key powerbrokers are critical contributors to the stability of this area despite their continued opposition to the authority of the Government. Their influence prevents significant consolidation of the opposing militant forces in Regional Command North; however, any fluctuations in this

balance of power could cause an imbalance that may allow the opposing militant forces to gain a stronger foothold.

(c) **Regional Command West**. Movements of the opposing military forces from Regional Command South to the west into Farah Province have been reported. Such activity has been focused in Farah and Badghis Provinces and directed at softer targets and the Afghan National Police. Major portions of Regional Command West remain stable, owing in part to successful regional control, as in Herat, and development efforts by the international community.

(d) **Regional Command South**. The Afghan National Security Forces, supported by ISAF, regained control of Musa Qala — a stronghold of the opposing militant forces and drug trade centre. Continued ISAF pressure forced the opposing militant forces to adjust their traditional winter patterns and caused significant tension within the leadership hierarchy. Opposing militant forces remain present throughout the region, although they are unlikely to seek direct contact with ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces, favouring instead asymmetric attacks.

(e) **Regional Command East**. The combined activities of ISAF, the Government, and non-governmental organizations in parts of Regional Command East produced positive results during the reporting period. The coordinated results of security and development operations are gaining the support of local tribes. The cooperation of the tribal leaders and their supporters allows sustainable progress in governance and development and provides an encouraging blueprint for future strategy in other areas of Afghanistan.

Afghan National Army

6. Despite a high operational tempo and considerable rebuilding challenges, the Afghan National Army continues to steadily improve. The army is becoming a more confident and capable fighting force and with continued mentorship will grow into a respected organization representative of the people of Afghanistan.

7 **Capability**. During the reporting period, Afghan army units continued to show measurable improvement and an eagerness to assume more responsibility. Focused efforts on improving the army's ability to sustain combat operations, conduct logistical planning and plan for and lead operations are developing the Afghan National Army into a self-sufficient force. Over 50 per cent of the army's combat units were considered capable of performing security operations with external support.

8. **Manning**. The Afghan National Army was authorized 70,000 personnel, and approximately 37,000 were assigned over the reporting period. As at 31 January 2008, present-for-duty rates in the combat units remained steady, with approximately 22,000 available for operations.

9. **Equipment**. Gradual improvement in the overall equipment situation continued but severe shortages remained. Efforts by countries to equip the army were gradually increasing.

10. **Training**. The continuing inability to adequately resource operational mentor and liaison teams remained the most significant limiting factor to the development of the Afghan army. These small teams of trainers play a critical role in the growth

of the army through their daily interaction with members of various units. Generating the teams in sufficient numbers remains a matter of priority for NATO.

Afghan National Police

11. The Afghan National Police requires significant effort in development to meet its desired level of capability. Underdevelopment of the police results in increased reliance on ISAF and Afghan army forces to offer the Afghan population continuity in security. Increased support and coordination from the international community is urgently required for the training, equipping and development of the Afghan police.

12. To improve the development of the Afghan police, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan has developed a draft concept of operation for international police mentor teams to provide the basis for ensuring standardized training within the police. Fielding adequate numbers of mentor teams remains a priority.

13. Focused District Development, the focal ongoing project of Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, has been initiated in several districts. The programme aims at enhancing police capabilities; transforming the Afghan uniformed police into a service loyal to the Afghan people and Afghan national interests; building a "prosecutor-driven justice system"; strengthening the linkage of the uniformed police to provincial, regional and national leaders and staff; and developing Afghan Ministry of the Interior capabilities by mentoring its leadership.

Counter-narcotics

14. The link between the illicit narcotics industry and insurgency has been apparent over the reporting period, further fuelling instability and the corruption that threatens all levels of governance, including police authority and the wider rule of law. Ultimately, this also prevents meaningful reconstruction and development.

15. The operation to retake Musa Qala proved that, with good cross-agency coordination, disruption of the illegal narcotics industry can be achieved during mainstream operations.

16. Within its mandate and resources, ISAF continued to support the Government's key counter-narcotics forces, both the Afghan Special Narcotics Force and the National Interdiction Unit. The Government, supported by ISAF, conducted a pre-planting information operations campaign that appears to have had some good results. ISAF has also provided logistic support to a number of Afghan interdiction operations.

Neighbouring countries

17. The security situation in Pakistan continues to influence the activities of the opposing militant forces in Afghanistan. The situation became extremely volatile during the reporting period as a result of the declared state of emergency (2 November-15 December 2007). The Government of Pakistan moved swiftly to increase Pakistani military operations in the Swat District and the federally administered tribal areas. While those operations were not decisive, the increased tempo of military operations forced the opposing militant forces to focus their efforts in Pakistan rather than Afghanistan and reduced the flow of fighters from Pakistan to Afghanistan. However, the various factions of opposing militant forces

in the federally administered tribal areas responded strongly to Pakistani military operations and there were indications that more ruthless commanders had started to supplant traditional tribal leaders in certain areas.

Programme Takhim-e-Sol

18. The Programme Takhim-e-Sol (Strengthening peace) is ongoing. As at 1 January 2008, nearly 5,000 people were reconciled via the programme. ISAF remained committed to supporting the programme within means available. President Karzai previously made reconciliation calls on the opposing militant forces.

Judicial reform and the rule of law

19. ISAF has a limited view of the Afghan judicial and penal system. Evidence suggests that the penal system continues to suffer from overcrowding, corruption and poor record-keeping. Widespread corruption and a general lack of awareness and understanding of the rule of law cause additional problems. The use of tribal or sharia law remains predominant.

20. During the reporting period, the Afghan Parliament's adoption of legislation continued at a slow pace. The absence of legislation minimized the ability of the judicial institutions to enforce law.

21. Formal State institutions of justice required a renewed and more coherent strengthening and restructuring effort. Several programmes were under way, with international support for the development of infrastructure and training of judges and prosecutors.

Disbandment of illegal armed groups

22. District implementation, which aims at implementing the disbandment of illegal armed groups at a more practical level by addressing those districts that can more easily be brought and held under compliance, is currently in its third implementation round:

(a) When combined with rounds 1 and 2, 52 districts in 22 provinces will have been affected by the implementation; 20 districts have already been declared compliant, with an additional 11 districts showing progress. To assist with the enforcement process, the Government is creating an enforcement unit. However, the Government has put additional enforced compliance operations on hold at the political level.

(b) The population in general does not support illegally armed groups, but in some areas people are coerced into agreeing with their activities. However, it should also be noted that the disbandment process is less effective in those areas of Afghanistan that are struggling to cope with security and narcotics challenges, and the process is further challenged where there is a lack of a sustained ISAF and/or Afghan security force presence.

(c) ISAF support to the disbandment of illegal armed groups continues. While the Government still sets the pace of the programme and establishes programme direction, ISAF representatives attend weekly meetings of the joint secretariat to ascertain the support and assistance required from ISAF. Such support is offered within ISAF resource availability.

Governance

23. Lack of security, lack of human capacity, inadequate infrastructure and widespread corruption continue to undermine the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan, and diminish the scope for the supporting role of ISAF and the wider international community in this critical area.

24. The development of legitimate, fair, robust and sustainable government institutions at national and subnational levels is a vital precursor to establishing the legitimacy and credibility of the Government among the Afghan people. Given the complex ethnic and tribal landscape and the legacy of the past, it must be expected that progress in this area will be slow. Currently, it is assessed that there is a broad degree of popular support for the Government. Given the slow progress, however, there is a growing risk that the Afghan population, increasingly jaded and cynical about the corruption, cronyism and partisan politics, may lose interest in the nascent political process.

25. The establishment of the Independent Directorate of Local Government with a mandate to develop clearer Government policy on subnational governance has been a positive development. The Directorate has recognized the importance of traditional tribal and family-based structures for local governance and is attempting to create a district "shura" model of local governance which capitalizes on those tribal and family linkages. The intention is that the shuras will provide representative government at local level in a form that is understood and accepted by locals and which interfaces with the national governance structures.

Development

26. Interaction between ISAF and the civilian environment is a key activity to ensure successful operations in Afghanistan. Development of an integrated strategy that optimizes support in line with the Afghanistan Compact would significantly further the synchronization of the efforts of the Government and the international community. Numerous difficulties persist with gaining the support of the average Afghan citizen and security remains a concern while attempting to show positive regional or countrywide effects.

27. Provincial Reconstruction Teams continue to play a key supportive role throughout the majority of the provinces and remain a primary mechanism for Afghan development and extending the reach of the Government and the international community. Coherence of effort between lead nations and the Government is essential in this respect.

28. An effective comprehensive approach by the international community aimed at synchronizing the efforts of the major stakeholders within Afghanistan, coupled with a decision to support all pillars of the Government's development strategy, is necessary to ensure a level of success and bring stabilization to Afghanistan. During the reporting period, the Government was on track to meet the strategy deadline of March 2008 for debt relief and preferential loan treatment set by the World Bank, thereby reaching one of the major milestones for future poverty reduction within Afghanistan.